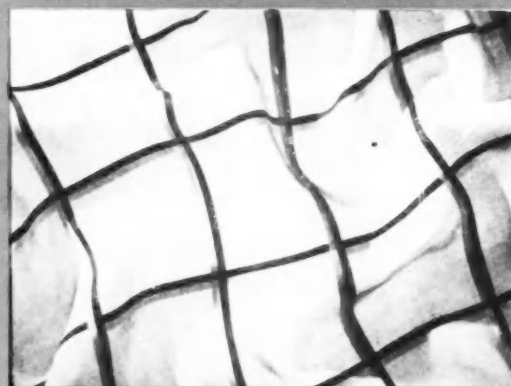
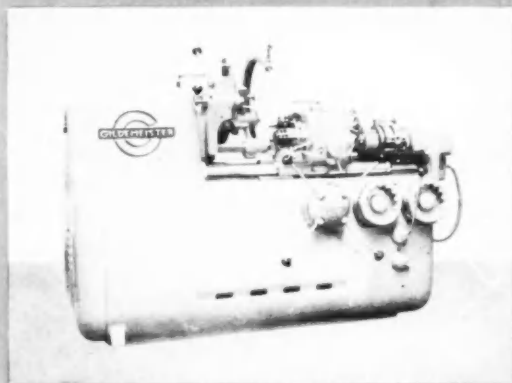


# Design

THE MAGAZINE FOR MANUFACTURERS, DESIGNERS AND RETAILERS



JUNE 1952 NUMBER 42

*The Council of Industrial Design*

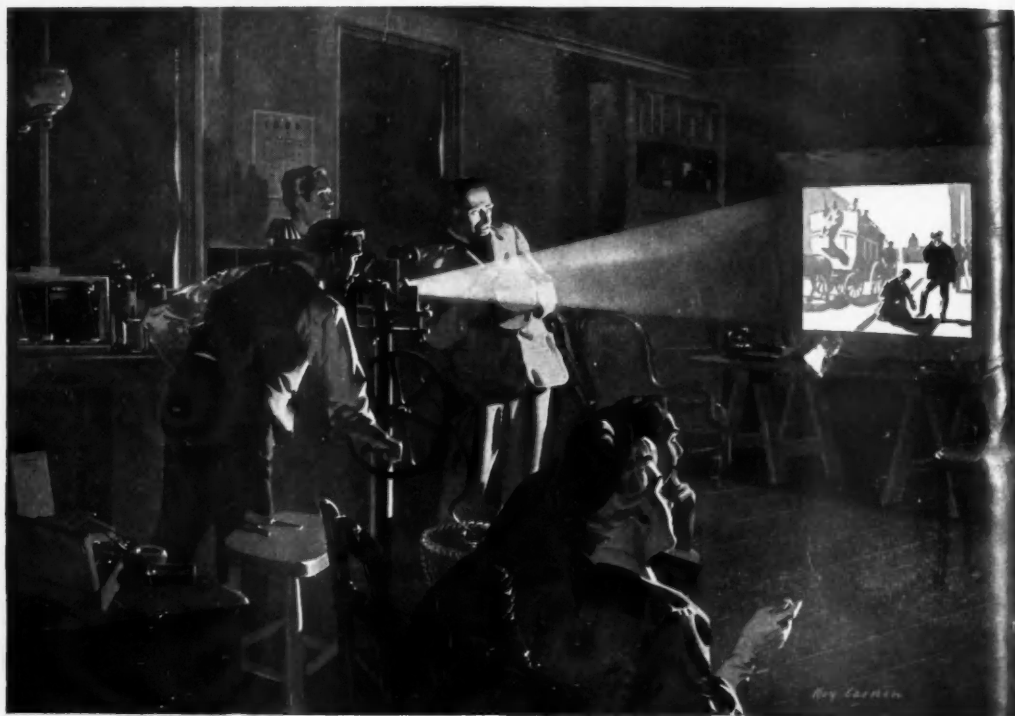
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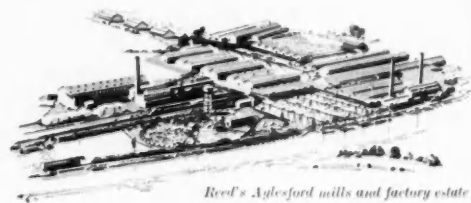
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IN THE HATTON GARDEN WORKSHOP of a scientific instrument maker, in 1895, strange new pictures were thrown on a magic lantern screen—pictures that *moved*. What may have seemed merely an intriguing novelty to the admiring witnesses was, in fact, the first commercially practicable film projector to be made in this country—the Theatrograph. Its inventor was Robert W. Paul, one of the purposeful men who made the 1890's a period of promise unique in our history. Another was Albert E. Reed, who that same year began to make super-calendered newsprint and other printing papers



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JUNE 1952

# Design

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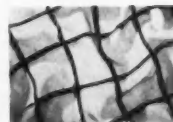
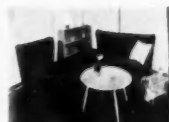
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## Dilemma of the BIF

EVEN THE FRIENDLIEST critic of the British Industries Fair must have noticed the bleak areas of unsold space, the thin attendances on the opening days, the absence of many leading firms in the industries represented and the cautious forecasts of its publicity officers.

The most heartening explanation of this state of affairs that we heard was the paradoxical one that the BIF has fallen victim to the export drive; firms which have in previous years relied on the BIF for their overseas contacts and customers now have world-wide chains of agents; following the exhortations of successive governments they have gone out actively to get business rather than wait for it to come to them once a year at Earl's Court or Olympia.

If that is the case one cannot perhaps look forward to a revival of the BIF in its present form; but it is unthinkable that we could do without a great annual display of the nation's products. It may mean that the BIF should change its character, that it should really become a prestige show for the country, just as it is for those regular stalwarts with household names who come in year after year, not, as they say, for profit but for prestige.

The reputation of the BIF is kept high by a few public-spirited companies who maintain consistently good standards in what they show and how they show it. For the rest the sort of wishful platitudes expressed at the banquets to launch the Fair no longer measure up to reality. To say that we have in the BIF "an array of products which for good quality and good design challenge comparison with any in the world" is to toy with boomerangs. The speakers on these occasions can have no more in mind than the handful of prominent stands. Many of the exhibits may well challenge comparison but are not likely to withstand it.

Gresham's Law is probably as valid for trade exhibitions as it is for currency. To walk round the fringes of Earl's Court or the galleries of Olympia is to frequent a parochial bazaar, not a proud national exhibition. Even the more established sections, such as pottery and glass, seemed to be infected this year by the same trivial values; the well-known names in the industries were not to be found. There is no prestige for Britain in showing at the BIF the inferior products of second-rate firms or the mean bric-à-brac and indecent novelties

that masquerade under the name of art manufacture.

And yet, for those who bothered to look there was plenty to be proud of; in textiles and carpets fresh designs were being offered and new techniques exploited; some original plastics finishes marked a great advance on previous years; there was much invention and good taste in the design and display of fire-resisting glass; the chemical companies as usual had devoted great care and expense to their goodwill offerings, though they expected little business from them; and in general the detailing and colouring of individual stands was interesting, attractive and in many cases economical. There was often a welcome subordination of the stand design to the display of the products. Indeed had all that was good in the Fair been assembled in one area it would have been an exciting, stimulating display.

Perhaps that is the answer; perhaps the BIF should start again from scratch and become a really selective show in which it would be an honour to be invited to exhibit; perhaps all the many famous firms who today hang back would then again compete to be seen with their equals. A show of that kind would be really worth publicising in every corner of the world and our industries might have second thoughts about

staging their own individual exhibitions in competition with the BIF.

The organisers of the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition attach growing importance to the standing of their exhibitors, particularly in the main halls, with results that have been widely acclaimed. What is good business for a newspaper exhibition might be good business for the nation.

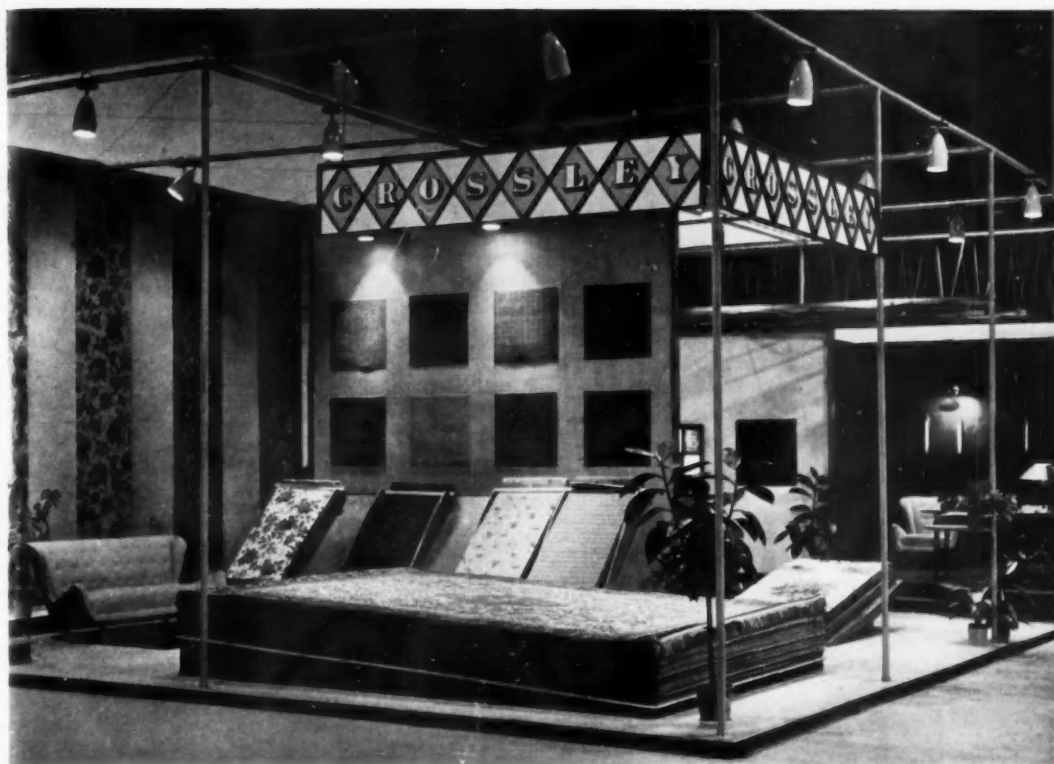
P. R.

## BIF Notebook

DESIGN has commented before on the frequent discrepancy at exhibitions between the design of a stand and the design of the goods shown on it. Nowhere at the BIF was this more remarkable than in the horology section at Olympia. A leading clock and watch manufacturer had gone to praiseworthy lengths to build a stand which sparkled with fresh colouring and elegance; and then, as if purposely to point the contrast, had loaded it with dark, shiny clock cases belonging to quite another tradition – if the flatulent modernism still practised in the furniture trade can be called a tradition. There was an uncanny resemblance between those glossy clock cases and the rotund, repeti-







*The test of a display stand is whether it shows off the goods, not whether it makes an easily photographable composition. These two examples from Earl's Court were for firms which had not previously commissioned contemporary designers to project their new designs. On the left, the admirable display of textiles by Nigel Walters, MSIA, for Gayonnes Ltd; above, Crossley's carpet stand by Robert Nicholson, MSIA.*

tive shapes seen earlier in the year at the Earl's Court furniture exhibition.

We have also referred to what W. R. Lethaby once called "our dear mistake of watertighting." The BIF again showed some lost opportunities. It seemed a pity, for instance, that a furnishing textile firm that was showing some really interesting and fresh patterns for curtains had not linked up in some way with makers of furniture, carpets or light fittings who are thinking along the same lines. Not only would the visitor then be able to see that there is a common trend in scale and character but the manufacturers themselves could learn from such joint displays to co-ordinate their colour ranges.

The wallpaper industry seems to be the first to crash these barriers; contemporary wallpapers were to be seen everywhere as backgrounds, whether for chemicals, clocks, carpets, glassware or plastics. Only the banks appeared to be completely unaware of the call for colour and pattern; their booths had a sad, second-hand look about them, as if they were determined, come what may, to perpetuate "the dark

brown taste of the British." By contrast the GPO booth at Earl's Court, a near neighbour of the banks, was fresh, inviting and right up to date.

Our Castle Bromwich reporter writes: "For a country whose very life depends on its export market, the appearance design and presentation of many of the smaller consumer goods was no match for the ingenuity, research and engineering processes that made their production possible; yet they served a purpose if only to throw into relief those many manufacturers whose stands reflect consistently sound design policies. Excellent examples were to be found among manufacturers of weighing and hardness testing equipment, garden tools, office equipment, plastic table ware and industrial mouldings, kitchen equipment and electrical appliances. Some of the outdoor exhibits illustrated how good British engineering design can be. One of the finest examples was a '12-yard scraper,' a huge machine used for muck shifting and levelling; another was a heavy track tractor with fully articulated suspension, cush drive for speed, with less vibration and several other new features."

# PROMOTING COTTON

*in wholesale and high fashion*

**Donald Tomlinson**, Director of the Cotton Board Colour Design and Style Centre, calls for closer collaboration between Lancashire mills and London couturiers

TODAY cotton is the most talked about fashion fabric. In the face of a "buyers' strike" cotton dresses have sold phenomenally. Lancashire's products have been publicised intensively by independent shops, store groups, newspapers and magazines. British wholesale cotton dresses have been worn by some of the smartest women in the world.

Yet the cotton industry is criticised for its fashion design standards. Though British cottons frequently appear in French couture collections, there are few British cottons to be seen in the London collections of the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers. One member of the Society has said that Lancashire's designs are bad and uninspired, the colours dull and boring and rarely changed year after year.

Since the days before the war when cotton fabrics and fashion were seldom mentioned in the same breath – when cotton meant the cheapest washing frocks and hardwearing sheets – enormous progress has been made. There is, however, still much to discuss.

As Director of the Cotton Board Colour Design and Style Centre I hope I shall not be tempted to exaggerate the importance of the work we have done at the Centre. Many of the most exciting developments, not only in the fashion but in the furnishing fabric field, have come about as a result of a trend of thinking being established by one firm and being taken up by others. The Centre, it is true, has worked to establish influences of this kind and has had a hand in some of the changes that have taken place. It may be best if, when talking about the first steps in styling-up cotton, I confine myself to the aims and work of the Centre, although, during the last few years, the

progress has tended to snowball and it is less easy to pinpoint in the same way the steps that have been taken and the reasons behind them.

The Colour Design and Style Centre was started twelve years ago during the war. It was clear then that in the future British cotton would have to face increased competition; from those countries that had competed with Lancashire before the war and – in a new form – from countries that would shortly be producing inexpensive cottons for their own consumption to their own satisfaction.

The Centre was founded in the belief that British cotton would need to offer extra sales appeal and that this would need to be closely related to quality and design. Only comparatively minor improvements can be made on the costing side. Cotton is a natural fibre and little can be done to control the price of the imported raw material. Some of our competitor countries are able to produce cotton cloths far more cheaply because they have cheaper labour available – a factor which can be counteracted only slightly in Lancashire. The problem was not merely to improve the general standard of design on cotton. It was necessary to reconsider the position of British cotton products in world trade and to adjust their status.

Obviously if this point of view were eventually to become generally accepted quite a change in the climate of Lancashire's thinking was needed. Gradually this change has been coming about over the past ten years. The Colour Design and Style Centre, when it started, attacked the problem from two angles. The first was to stimulate interest in design as such; this was perhaps the more straightforward of the two problems. It depended largely upon



possibility of stepping-up their products in design, in finish or in quality – sometimes separately, sometimes in an alliance of two or all three of these factors. Many similar experiments were carried out with the couture and, stimulated by these successes, and by the progress being made in America in the styling of cottons, many British wholesale houses began to take an interest in cotton as fashion; in cotton dresses which sold on their fashion value as distinct from their utilitarian qualities. During recent years this trend has developed rapidly. There are few wholesale houses of repute, at all price levels, who do not include some cottons in their summer collections.

There was, then, a general acceptance of cotton as an essential part of the fashion picture. Cotton was selling as fashion. There was a secondary and even more important development. A well-known Lanca-

*Wholesale cottons are not confined to tub frocks. Left: a black and white piqué formal cotton by Horrockses Fashions.*

*Below: a strong printed design on organdie by Roosen Silks was used for this navy and white evening dress by Matelli.*

giving publicity to design matters, staging exhibitions and establishing a confidence in the Centre's judgment. The second and more significant part of the job was that of raising the status of cotton and in this the circumstances produced by the war were of some help.

British fashion designers were unable to buy, as had been their habit, very largely from Continental sources. They were, therefore, far more ready to look at British products. The Centre worked closely with them and sought their ideas. Working in conjunction with converters, the Centre was able to assist in the development of their ideas and show collections of cottons that matched anything produced abroad.

Perhaps the best example of work of this kind was that carried out with a firm which, until the war, had been selling printed silks to the Paris couture. When silk became difficult to get they were persuaded to use fine cotton poplins. They proved that it was nonsense to talk of a design being too good for cotton. They proved, too, that the finest yarns, fine weaving, a good design and the right finish, could take the fibre into a fashion class previously undreamed of. These cottons were in the main stream of fashion. They were produced at the highest level of creative fashion thinking and were in key with couture trends. It was the example of this firm that led so many others to consider the





*The British couture uses a fine cotton quality. A suit of John Hall's citron yellow piqué by Michael of Lachasse.*

shire firm sponsored the production of an all-cotton dress range which gradually became one of the most distinguished collections of wholesale dresses in the country. By employing first-class designers who understood the fibre, and by working in close conjunction with the designers of the dresses, this house developed a distinctive cotton handwriting and a new fashion. Their dresses sold because they were cotton.

We have then two aspects of cotton in fashion. First, the cotton fabrics designed to fit in with the general fashion picture which prove that the fibre is up to the highest demands that fashion may make; second, the cottons designed to sell as cotton – on the merits of the fibre and on the cotton design handwriting developed for it.

The development of the fashion for cotton has been the more marked. It is understandable that other wholesale houses have since become specialists in cotton dress production. It is understandable, too, that to Lancashire, which has always tended to think in terms of bulk markets, this field should be of the greater interest. When – as I said at the beginning of this article – cotton today is the most talked of and successful fashion fabric, it is to this aspect of cotton that people refer. When Lancashire's fashion awareness is

criticised, it is the other aspect of cotton which people have in mind. It is cotton's absence – comparatively speaking – from the high fashion picture and Lancashire's lack of readiness to co-operate with couturiers, which the critics deplore.

Since the war the demands on Lancashire, both at home and overseas, have been considerable. It is understandable that manufacturers should prefer to produce piece goods ranges for direct sale and to confine their experiments to working closely with wholesale houses whose demands are likely to be large, rather than with the haute couture. By working closely with well-informed wholesale houses many Lancashire firms have learned a great deal about fashion and design. More, of course, could be done in this respect, but there is no denying the achievements to date. But, at the couture level, since the initial success was achieved, the progress has been comparatively small. Couturiers do frequently use Lancashire's finest basic types – the piques, velvets, poplins and organdies, which few countries in the world can approach for quality – but they would welcome a closer co-operation with Lancashire in the production of new designs and new types of fabrics. In recent years it has been difficult to find the time for such experiments which may, at the outset, involve comparatively minute quantities of cloth. There are a few firms though whose design standards are extremely high and who have maintained and developed this contact.

Other reasons for the lack of interest which has existed in collaboration of this kind must also be examined. The initial co-operation with the couturiers publicised cotton as a fashion fabric. This kind of publicity is today being realised a hundred-fold through the press attention wholesale dresses receive. Overseas visitors to this country like to buy the clothes which Englishwomen are known to be wearing, and stores abroad the cloths which they know to be widely fashionable. These facts support the industry's concentration on co-operation with wholesale makers. Couture establishments maintain the highest standards of make, fit and styling which affect the price of the resulting garment, whether made in cotton or another fibre. The success of wholesale cotton dresses has been so remarkable that some couturiers admit that their customers are well satisfied with the best products of the wholesale industry. They say that it would be uneconomic to produce cottons for the same fashion purposes; and the wholesale ranges are by no means confined to simple cotton frocks.

*On facing page: a wholesale dress by Horrockses Fashions in a print typical of today's cotton handwriting.*



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Having looked at cotton's progress over the past ten years we can appreciate some of the reasons for the concentration of interest, more recently, on collaboration with wholesale, rather than with couture, houses. The industry will have to work hard to retain its present fashion position, but can it go even further?

Certainly more Lancashire houses producing dress fabrics could, by working in conjunction with makers-up, gain closer contacts with fashion tastes – painlessly. Developing new design ideas to a customer's requirements is obviously one of the more satisfactory forms of experiment. More could be done to integrate the design of firms' fabric ranges for wholesale dress and piece goods sales. Those firms who have made strides in recent years have established very personal design handwritings. Whilst meeting the changing demands of fashion and the requirements and tastes of different sections of the public, they have developed individual lines which both the public and the fashion trade have found acceptable.

Today, it would appear, one of the most successful sales techniques is the acknowledged fabric house-fashion designers link-up which is promotable and adds to the stature of both. When the designs in a range have little in common, but that they are "different," more than one or two are unlikely to appeal to the same maker – who has himself learned the importance of a handwriting. A joint promotion – which draws attention to fabrics sold over the counter as well – is unlikely to spring naturally from so slight an association. It is true that we are now fringing the old problem of "branded" lines, but we touch a vital design problem too.

It is true that the cotton fabrics most in demand during the recent difficult months have been those

known to the public both by name and by the character and high standard of their design. The best makers-up are eager to develop their own cotton handwriting which will be original and personal to them. They know what will make-up effectively and cut economically. In the absence of a Design Director, capable of appreciating these problems and developing an integrated handwriting, it is worth while I believe for a converter to seek this kind of close collaboration with a fashion house. Its ideas can lead to a promotional partnership and, in addition, to a fabric range of greater fashion awareness and personality, and simpler to make-up, for sale over the drapery counter.

I am generalising of course. By doing so I may seem to advocate that the cotton industry should give up textile designing altogether, and leave it to the fashion trade. I advocate nothing of the kind. Where there is no clear design policy and no executive is fully informed on the needs of the fashion trade and capable of conceiving and developing an integrated range, I suggest that much may be learned from co-operation with well-chosen fashion houses. I do advocate the appointment of a first-class Design Director and a free hand for him in the development of an individual design handwriting.

My remarks so far have, by implication at least, been concerned largely with printed design; with the pattern to be imposed on existing fabric types and so with cloths intended first for the wholesale fashion trade or home-dressmaking. But if cotton is to progress, even to maintain its present standing, much more will have to be done to develop new techniques for printed cloths and particularly new woven fashion types. New finishes and design will have to be applied to existing types to suit them to different fashion uses. New weights and finishes for cloths like cotton velvet, cord and denim, could extend their fashion potentialities. It is in the woven dress fabric field that one can conceive the greatest developments taking place. Gingham have been shown in darker, more subtle colour combinations recently which have taken them beyond

*"It is in the woven dress fabric field that one can conceive the greatest developments taking place."*

*Left: Today a successful wholesale fabric, Whitworth and Mitchell's glazed leno weave was first used by Norman Hartnell.*

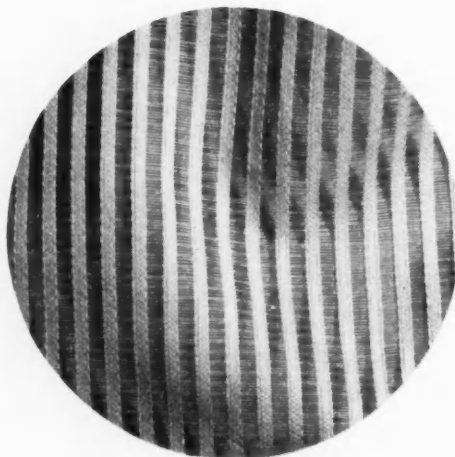
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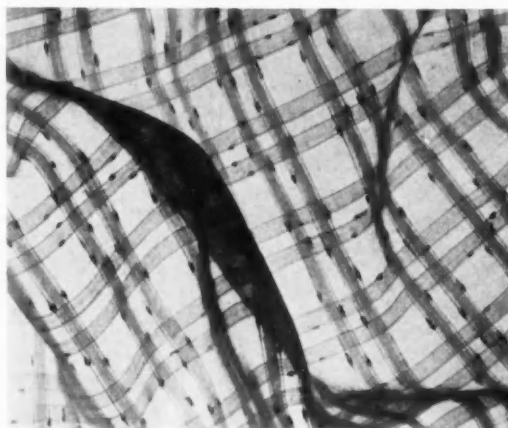
*A knop gingham dress fabric by Marshall Fabrics in yellow, black, blue and pink.*

*Two examples from Tootal, Broadhurst, Lee's range of Robia cotton voiles which includes drawn thread stripes, satin checks and knop effects all on a fine sheet cotton. These fabrics are widely used by leading wholesale model houses.*

*A printed brocade. The Everglaze process is used to print a woven effect on a cotton dress fabric by Henry Marchington & Sons.*

*On front cover: a checked Robia cotton voile from Tootal, Broadhurst, Lee.*





the "home spun" summer frock class. But many new woven types and weights are needed and these should be developed imaginatively with their fashion values firmly in mind.

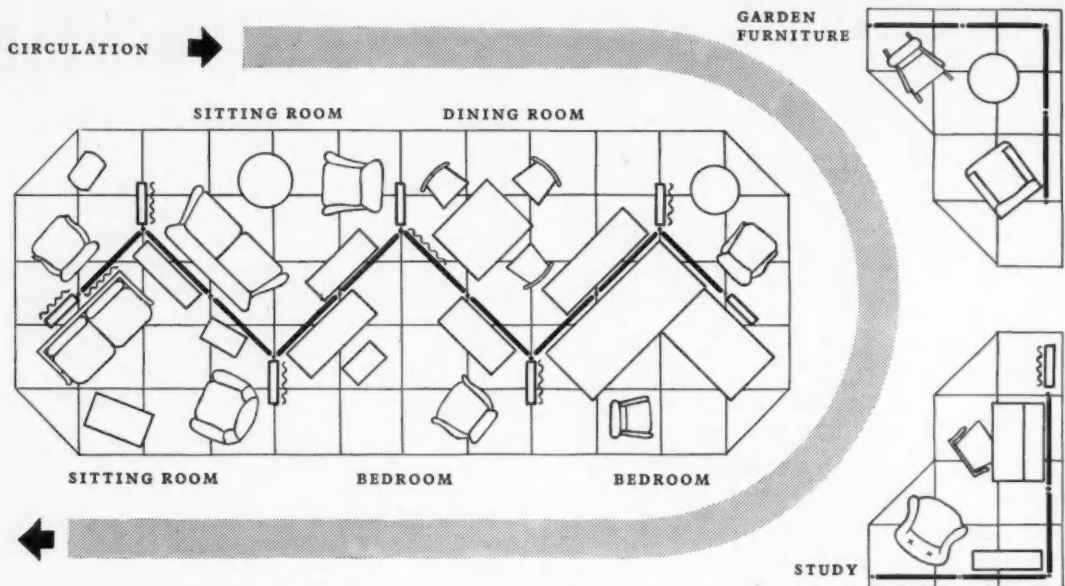
Gradually ginghams – like voiles and organdies – have progressed from pastel prettiness to bolder, more effective, treatments. Fashion's use of woven handkerchief cloths has encouraged the development of colour woven sheers. Resistance to Jacquard figured white shirtings as such, first launched them as fashion cloths, piece dyed in jewel colours. The fashion success of these developments has shown them to be welcome, but there has been little follow-through.

For a new fabric to be most effectively taken up it needs to appear with the timing and fashion authority that the couture can give. A British firm recently produced a first-class dress fabric on the down-slope of the fashion for that type of cloth. The British couture and model houses had already exploited the trend for that type of cloth with an Italian production, technically less fine.

Some of us may feel that we can predict something of the direction textile fashion will take in the future, but it is in the collections of the world's couture designers that the trend is likely to appear first. They will decide just what aspect will be spot-lit; they have the ear of the fashion press, the eye of the public. Buyers whose choice decides what the public finally sees in the shops choose from their collections.

Collaboration with these designers in the production of new cloths is the most certain way of gaining for these cloths the maximum fashion status and publicity. This can help the manufacturer who wishes to sell to wholesale dress houses later or to the piece goods trade. It is to be hoped that with a gradual return to more normal trading circumstances converters will be able to make greater opportunities for collaboration of this kind. The British couture is looked to by buyers all over the world for certain standards as typically British contributions to world fashion. London's designers can help British converters and manufacturers develop along these lines so that their cloths will have perhaps less about them of a watered-down, Continental or American handwriting and more that is inherently British.

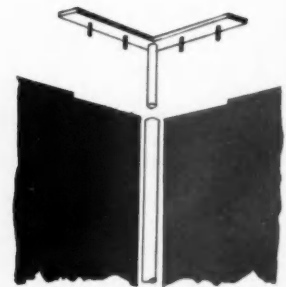
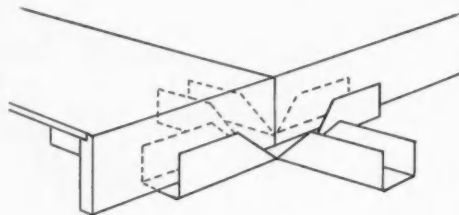
So, looking to the future, we should perhaps hope for increased co-operation with wholesale houses in the development of higher design standards and more personal handwritings in the cloths which will sell on their qualities as cotton. We should look forward, too, to greater collaboration with the couture in the development of new types of cotton for the world fashion picture.



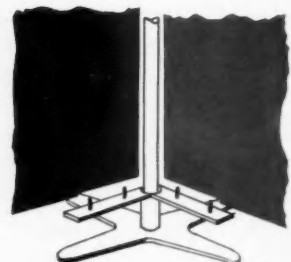
Typical layout plan of the "room corners" exhibition showing floor blocks which are normally covered with felts or carpets; "rooms" are separated by double-sided panels. Additional single-sided panels and floor blocks enable the entire display to be arranged in a continuous broken line to be viewed from one side only.



The panels are made of wooden frames faced and edged with hardboard and are 6ft. 6in. high. Electrical sockets near the bottom are linked together by internal wiring and ordinary flex connectors. Light tubular metal posts at 3ft. 6in. intervals carry adjustable spot lights and support the panels. Open wooden shelf units separate the rooms still further. The floor blocks are 3in. deep with hardwood sides and a cellulosed Weyroc surface. They are held together by a metal clip (below).



Method of fixing panels to posts at top and bottom (above and below). The tubular lug on the top fixing slides into the post and that on the bottom fixing slides over it.



## SELLING THROUGH DISPLAY

by Jean Stewart, Retail Officer, Council of Industrial Design

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the demand for good contemporary furniture and furnishings is increasing not only in the South but all over the country, and this is largely due to retailers who appreciate their qualities, understand the importance of display, and realise the value of keeping sales staff well informed. The Council of Industrial Design has been able to help retailers in this campaign by recommending designers who can arrange exhibitions in shops, by encouraging buyers to consult its Photographic Library when looking for

new merchandise, and by arranging courses and lectures for salesmen.

It was found that some shops wishing to put on exhibitions of contemporary furnishings had not enough stock to do so, nor in some cases could they afford the fee of a designer. The Council, therefore, decided last autumn to produce, and offer on hire to retailers, a small exhibition that can be easily transported, set up and dismantled. A series of room corners made by screens was thought to be the most appropriate form

*The "room corners" exhibition gives the impression of a series of separate rooms without taking up as much space as rooms would require.*





*The exhibition has been shown at the stores named in the towns marked with a plain dot on the map above: at those with a circled dot, it is still to be seen—at Newcastle, until 7 June; Birmingham, 12–28 June; Worcester, 4–19 July; Winchester, 12–27 September; Newbury, 3–18 October.*

to adopt and the method of construction presented an interesting design problem which the Council's Exhibition Officer, Philip Fellows, solved in an ingenious way. The exhibition comprises interlocking screens and floor blocks which can be used in a row against a wall, as an island site, or as separate units. It is easily set up by maintenance staffs in shops under the supervision of one experienced person.

The object of the exhibition is to introduce new merchandise and display it against suitable backgrounds with the right accessories. In the space available complete rooms cannot be shown, but each corner gives suggestions for wall and floor treatments suitable for the type of furniture put with them, and light fittings, vases and accessories have all been chosen to marry-up happily with the fresh designs of the furnishings. The whole display is colourful, stimulating and fits easily into different types of showroom.

The scheme was launched by an announcement in the trade press, and the Independent Stores Association immediately booked it. A tour to seven member stores of the Association started in January and finishes in June and after that, except for a period for any necessary maintenance work, the exhibition is booked up until October.

On the opening day in each store a representative of



*The corner on the left shows part of a bedroom suite in silky oak shown against one papered wall with a pink and white trellis design and the other painted dark olive green. Note the rise and fall lamp which also swivels and would give a pleasing and efficient light to the dressing table. The group on the right suggests the corner of a study. The woods are mahogany and beech, the wallpaper dark grey with a pink and blue design, the chair dark red and the rug two shades of grey. Front cover picture: Another room corner. The wallpaper is patterned with a silver star on a white ground, the settee and chair are scarlet, the floor dark blue and the fabric is in blue, white and black.*



the Council takes parties of the staff round the exhibition explaining the design points which are in fact selling points. It has been found that most salesmen and saleswomen are enthusiastic about it when their interest is aroused. Further evidence of this interest in contemporary design has been demonstrated at the residential courses held by the Council for furniture and furnishings salesmen. Students from shops not yet stocking contemporary furniture are generally anxious to go back and persuade their buyers to give them the opportunity of selling it.

Comments from some of the stores that have already housed the exhibition are of interest. One says: "Most of the viewers have obviously taken the trouble to come along especially, and are genuinely interested. They invariably spend a long time studying every detail. In the main they are the very type of people we endeavour to attract to the store. Possibly the big percentage are of the younger people contemplating furnishing for the first time. A second category is students of the university and college of architecture. These people have been along in great numbers and are keenly interested in design. A third element is other traders and manufacturers." Another believes that "the exhibition has aroused serious consciousness of good design in contemporary furniture and there is no doubt that the results will be far-reaching." A furniture buyer of a Northern store said that the demand for ill-designed modernistic furniture was decreasing and he felt that before long the main demand would be for good contemporary furniture on the one hand or for accurate reproductions on the other.

It is too soon yet for the stores to assess the business resulting from the exhibition, for customers often take time to make up their minds and may later on refer to something shown many months before. We have, however, evidence of the success of a previous exhibition held in another store in the North which reported that within a year after the visit of the exhibition the floor space devoted to contemporary furniture had been doubled.

The importance of good display in selling contemporary furniture is stressed by many retailers who do good business with it. So often complaints that it will not sell come from people who have sandwiched it between bread-and-butter lines. In the February 1949 issue of *DESIGN*, I wrote about the experiment made by the Nordiska Kompaniet in Stockholm in setting up a small shop within their store in which only good inexpensive contemporary furnishings are sold. The illustration of the showroom of N K Bo, as this pilot shop is called, shows the use of movable

display screens on which the CoID has based its touring exhibition. Equipment of this sort would be comparatively cheap to produce and should be a great asset in furnishing departments. Displays can easily be changed by moving the screens to new positions and by repapering or redistemping their surfaces.

Three years ago I asked "Why do we not do more of this sort of thing in England?", for at that time only a few hardy pioneers were taking chances by devoting space to contemporary furniture. It is now really heartening to look round and see the developments that have since taken place.

Believing that demand will increase, we plan to offer this touring exhibition to retailers again next year but entirely refurbished and restocked with the latest designs. We feel that this type of exhibition is of value to retailers in giving them the chance to test the reaction of their customers without having to buy stock they are not yet sure they can sell. It also suggests ways in which shops can improve their own standard of display. The retailer is asked to pay only a small hire charge and for the transport and labour involved. All enquiries should be addressed to the Retail Section of the Council of Industrial Design, Tilbury House, Petty France, London SW 1.



NK Bo, the Swedish pilot shop for inexpensive contemporary furniture, uses a type of layout which has influenced the design of the Council's present exhibition and might with advantage affect the layout of furniture departments in British stores.

# LETTERING

## *in nameplate design*

by ALEC DAVIS

THE DESIGN OF the product is far more important than the design of the nameplate attached to it; but that is no reason why we should tolerate badly-designed nameplates. They are the feature which, more often than any other, mars the appearance of well-designed articles, and usually the poorest thing about them is their lettering. It may be ugly, it may be pretentious, it may be simply dull: rarely is it free from all these faults.

When one compares the standard of nameplate lettering with the higher standards of lettering in some other fields, one is tempted to attribute it to the methods by which nameplates are produced; but there is little justification for doing so. Earlier issues of

DESIGN\* have paid considerable attention to methods of producing nameplates, both as separate plates and as integrally cast lettering, and if any general conclusion can be drawn from our notes it is that a few processes impose severe limitations on the designer, but the majority are no more limiting than other techniques of reproduction such as high-speed newspaper printing or showcard silk-screening; the limitations, moreover, are on size rather than style of lettering. Nor is the degree of freedom surprising when it is remembered that printed letters are themselves impressions of alloy diecastings.

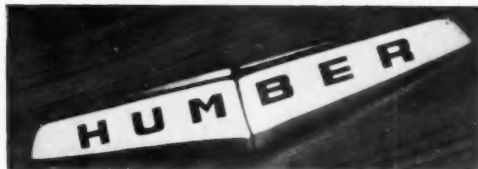
\* October 1950, pages 20-24, "What's in a nameplate?" by J. Beresford-Evans; November 1950, pages 25-26, "Lettering in cast iron" by James White; December 1950, pages 22-23, "A new technique for nameplates."

*For the historically-minded, early locomotives provide some excellent examples of nameplate lettering which is readable, full of character and appropriate to the machine on which it is used. The Herod, a London and South Western Railway engine of 1865-90, is illustrated here. (Photograph: Locomotive Publishing Co Ltd.)*





Even on the most reputable of products, distorted letter-forms which are neither beautiful nor very readable are often used to fit nameplates of awkward shape . . .



. . . but these examples show that even where the form of the plate is unusual, it is not necessary for the individual letters to be forced into abnormal shapes – a practice which inevitably reduces their legibility.

The first requirement of any lettering is readability; the second requirement of *display* lettering, whether it is in printed advertising or in nameplates, is individuality. When this order of priorities is reversed, when legibility is sacrificed to the desire to be “different”, dignity and beauty are usually lost at the same time.

It may be instructive to analyse some of the more familiar faults which result from an excessive striving after individuality. First (figures 1–3), there is the nameplate in which letters are distorted out of their accustomed shapes to fit some real or imaginary outline – a circle, hexagon, triangle or diamond, for example. This practice is so common that it no longer achieves its own limited aim of individuality: all the

cookie shapes have been used before. You can, of course, have a frame for your lettering *without* distorting the letter-forms to fill it. Space between the letters and the outline will throw them both into greater prominence (4–7).

A second style of nameplate lettering which seeks to be individual is the Signature of the Founder (8, 9, 29, 31, 33). Its letters are usually in a laboured kind of script; often the name slopes upwards from left to right and is underlined by a tail as inconvenient as a mermaid's on dry land – a tail that caricatures the flourish with which the Victorian founder completed his autograph. But the strokes are usually so thick that anyone who really wrote his name like that must have written not with pen and ink but with a match-

stick dipped in treacle. The fact that lettering of this kind is most commonly found on cake-boxes and seedsmen's catalogues ought to deter designers of serious mechanical products from using it; but does it? Look around. . . .

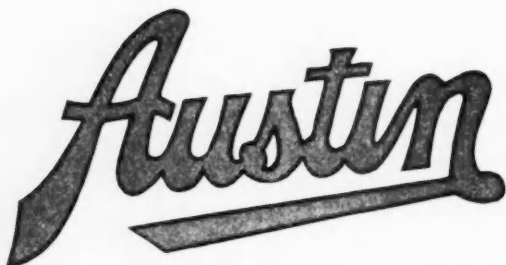
The distorted shape and the swollen signature are old-fashioned failings; but the desire to be slickly modern produces equally illegible and unlovely results. There is a fashion at present for cut-out letters which, because they are diecast, can more economically be made in one piece. The designer, reasonably enough, joins them together; but his joins form horizontal lines between widely-spaced narrow letters, so that they are as prominent as the letters themselves (10, 11). Unlike the joins in good handwriting or the serifs in a good type-face, they do not make the letters more readable, but less so.

These bad habits, ancient and modern, would matter less if they were not catching, but "all we, like sheep" seems to be the motto of nameplate designers; a bad example is followed at least as widely as a good

one. The works designers who are responsible for the bulk of British industry's products, and the engineer-designers especially, would be the first to admit that their training seldom includes any study in the appreciation of good lettering, still less in its creation.

Industry could make wider use of specialist consultant designers in this field. The typographical designer is the specialist who is most likely to be qualified to advise on these matters. Type-designs have been coming out in a fairly steady stream for 500 years now; many of them possess legibility, individuality, and beauty. Good letter-forms have been evolved, too, in the kindred arts of penmanship, carving and engraving. From this wealth of material it should be possible to find answers to many of the problems of nameplate lettering.

At the same time, it is not enough merely to take a leaf out of the type-specimen book; as much depends on the way the letters are used as on the individual letter-forms - and that is why the experience of the specialist designer could be so useful.

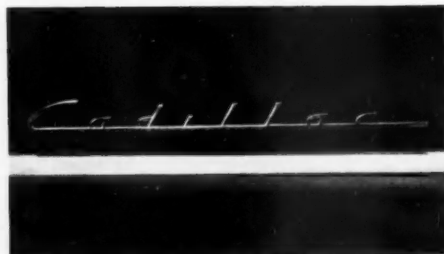


8



9

IN THE "SIGNATURE OF THE FOUNDER" tradition. These examples are obsolescent, but other manufacturers still use similar scripts, so drastically thickened that they have little or no resemblance to a normally written signature. Thus the only justification for their strange letter-forms is lost.



10

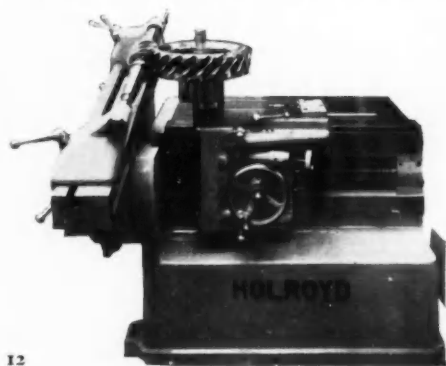


11

"RUN-TOGETHER" SCRIPTS are fashionable at the moment as a result of the vogue for diecast lettering. They appear on cars, cleaners, refrigerators. The designer has been mastered by the method of production, instead of mastering it. The sooner this fashion dies, the better for legibility.

There is much that could be done. Stocky block capitals of nineteenth-century origin (7, 12, 13) are not the only kind of sanserif lettering, nor the most beautiful. Their use in engineering is so widespread that it may be called traditional – perhaps because most patternmakers have them readily available for incorporation in castings; but it shows lack of imagination and enterprise to use them in forms other than castings, and on delicate scientific instruments or light domestic products. There are other sanserifs, more suitable for products in these categories (14–19). As long ago as 1906, Edward Johnston wrote: “It is quite possible to make a beautiful and characteristic alphabet of equal-stroke letters, on the lines of the so-called ‘Block Letter’ but properly proportioned and finished”; and later type-designers have done so, in such faces as Gill, Erbar, Cable, Futura and Granby.

For products whose solidity is something to be proud of, a possible alternative to “blocks” is provided by slab-serif or Egyptian letters (20–23). And there are always the traditional Roman letter-forms,



12



13

BLOCK LETTERS of nineteenth-century origin are used in many branches of engineering because they are readily available in the form of patternmakers' letters for incorporation in castings. Some variation can be achieved where lower-case letters are used to supplement the traditional block capitals.



14



15



16



17



18



19

NEWER SANSERIFS are better-proportioned than the early “blocks.” There are many twentieth-century type-designs in this category which can form a basis of nameplate lettering, to be cast, injection-moulded, chemically etched or printed – all processes which are represented in the illustrations above.



20



21

**MILLS**

22



23

EGYPTIANS, by reason of their "chunkiness" and freedom from hair-line strokes or serifs, are easy to reproduce by casting and by most of the other accepted methods of nameplate production. Their suggestion of solidity makes them appropriate for use on many engineering products.

18



24



25



26



27



28

ROMAN LETTERS admit of more variation than is sometimes realised. Their classical quality ensures that they will not date readily: there is scope for them to be used more widely on products for which a long useful life is expected.

the forms which we are most accustomed to read whenever we pick up a coin or a catalogue, a magazine or *The Times*. Admittedly, if all nameplate lettering were in this style (24-28) the lack of variety might pall, but in practice it is so rarely used that more of it would be welcome. The fact that it is classical should itself be a virtue in the eyes of manufacturers of products which are built to last, for nothing looks quite so unfashionable as the fashion of yesterday. It is unfortunate if lettering which made a product look up-to-the-minute when it was new makes it look out-of-date before its useful life is ended.

The nameplate gives the finishing touch to fine products on which the reputation of their makers - in the aggregate, British industry's reputation - depends; it can increase their attractiveness to a degree that is out of all proportion to its very moderate cost. Surely its design, and especially the design of its lettering, deserve some expenditure of thought and specialised knowledge. We have a fund of good type-designs to draw on, and the typographic and calligraphic skill to design anew when these resources seem inadequate.

Design: Number 42



29



30



31



32

BEFORE AND AFTER. Above, the nameplate on the Gestetner duplicator in 1929 (top) and in 1952. The second version was designed by Raymond Loewy Associates. Above right, old and new plates for confectionery machinery. Right, Creda cooker plates: here, too, the "signature of the founder" has been discarded.

33



#### NOTES ON ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1: The *Oilaulic* 6-ton bench press by John Mills and Co (Llan-diloes) Ltd. See also 22.
- 2, 3: Reproduced from recent trade press illustrations.
- 4, 5, 6: Enamel-filled plates by Joseph Fray Ltd, Birmingham. (5, for Singer Motors Ltd.)
- 7: From a Ruston traction-engine, c 1920. Fixing-screws form the centres of the stars. *Photograph by Alec Davis.*
- 8: Compare 21.
- 12: Lathe by John Holroyd and Co Ltd. *Photograph by Manor Studios.*
- 13: Chemically etched plate by Caxton Name Plate Manufacturing Co Ltd, Richmond, Surrey.
- 14: Small lettering can be accurately moulded in plastics, as on the end-plate of the Multitone *Compactor* hearing aid, shown here approximately 14 times actual size. Injection-moulded by Case Development Co Ltd, London SE 26.
- 15, 16: By Reliance (Nameplates) Ltd, Twickenham.
- 17: Integrally cast lettering on the *Gildematic* Model RV turret lathe by Gildemeister & Co AG, Bielefeld, Germany. (See also front cover and page 27.)
- 18: Sand-cast plate by Butler Jones (Nameplates) Ltd, London SE 26.
- 19: Detachable paper label used on table lamps by Hadrill and Horstman Ltd, Godalming.
- 20: as 18.
- 21: From an Austin van tailboard. Compare 8.
- 22: Advertising name-block used by the firm whose machine name-plate is seen in 1.
- 23: A Trapinex paint transfer, standardised for products of Norman Bartleet Ltd; shown here on a sifter and elevator (used in sweet manufacture).
- 24: Plated sand-casting for Jackson Boilers Ltd, Leeds, by Butler Jones (Nameplates) Ltd (who also produce the same plate in two-colour enamel finish).
- 25: Plastic plate for Dunn's furniture.
- 26: Printed aluminium. Designed by Frank Mortimer, NRD, MS1A.
- 27: Plastic plate for Falco Electrical Appliances Ltd, Audenshaw. Used on the Falco electric cooker.
- 28: Printed aluminium. Designed by Roy F. Perkins.
- 29: Moulded integrally in a plastic cover-plate.
- 30: Pressure die-casting (fixed from the back). Designed 1945.
- 32: Based on Gill Sans Condensed and Perpetua Bold type-faces.
- 33: For Simplex Electric Co Ltd, Oldbury: the old plate enamelled; the new (below) cast and plated. Compare old and new *printed* versions of the Creda trademark reproduced in *DESIGN*, April 1950, page 4.



## THREE COACHES FROM THREE COUNTRIES

THE COACH ILLUSTRATED at top of page (and we believe it deserves this position) is a new Spanish make, the Pegaso, operated by Auto-transporte Turístico Español, of Madrid.

The coach below it, of slightly earlier design, is the American Greyhound *Scenicruiser*. One's first impression is of the similarity of line between the two coaches, but a second glance shows that there are also many differences; and, broadly speaking, it seems that the Pegaso has all the refinements, the *Scenicruiser* all the vulgarities. It is to be expected that Spain will learn from the experience of other countries in the development of her industries; but it is interesting to see that the designers of the Spanish coach have not been content to imitate the work of others, but, aesthetically at least, have improved on it.

The Pegaso *Monocasco* is of chassissless construction, with stressed metal bodywork: the lower panels are of steel, the upper of corrugated aluminium. The colour-scheme is blue and silver; inside, the upholstery is in blue leather (*real leather*). With a 125 h.p. Diesel engine, the coach carries 32 passengers, with a crew of three for long-distance touring.

Finally, at foot of page we illustrate the interior of a British coach whose features are – fortunately – exceptional rather than typical: the object at bottom centre, among the rabbit's-ear decorations, is an imitation coal fire. The trade paper *Passenger Transport* published an account of this vehicle under the headline: "Coach with an unusual addition to its heating effect."

A. D.

CREDITS: 1951 Pegaso coach designed and made by Empresa Nacional de Autocamiones SA, Barcelona. Illustration, courtesy *Bus and Coach*.

1949 *Scenicruiser*; industrial designer, A. Baker Barnhart of Raymond Loewy Associates. Photograph from *Architectural Review*.

British coach for Lucky Line Coaches Ltd, Edgware. Body by Plaxtons on Maudslay chassis. Illustration, courtesy *Passenger Transport*.

## 'People want furniture that is warm and cosy'

R. D. Russell advises Scottish designers to find out what the mass market wants and likes

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF a contemporary vernacular depends first upon finding out what people want and like in the broadest sense," said Professor R. D. Russell, speaking in Glasgow recently. "I think they like warm colour and a certain solidity, and although Jacobean reproductions give them these there must be dozens of alternatives, for it is not really Jacobean furniture that people want but furniture that is warm and cosy."

He was speaking at a meeting arranged by the Council of Industrial Design Scottish Committee to give entrants to their recent Furniture Design Competition an opportunity to discuss the results with the judges (Professor Russell of the Royal College of Art, Neil Morris, Glasgow manufacturer, and David Woolfson of Elders, Glasgow retailers).

"This particular competition seemed to be a particularly interesting and pertinent one for its aim was to make at least the beginnings of a new and at the same time popular vernacular in contemporary furniture," said Professor Russell. "It seemed to the jury that this challenge had not been accepted by the great majority of the entrants and the purpose of this meeting is to make clear the terms of reference and to discuss possible next steps. The terms as published were:

The aim of the competition is to encourage development in the design of low priced furniture for today. In most Scottish homes, the demand is said to be for furniture with more character than is usually associated with contemporary design. The light structure and colour so popular in Scandinavia, for instance, may not have the same appeal in this country, where interest of detail and warmth of feeling are looked for in furniture which must also have an appearance of worth and solidity."

Professor Russell continued: You see this competition was not for designs in a vacuum, and that is quite right and proper. To be really successful furniture must not only be well and sensitively designed; it must be capable of being economically produced for a mass market and it must be acceptable by that market. If it fails in any one of these three respects it is, to some extent, a failure in total. The essential relationship, the trinity, of designer, maker and buyer must be maintained and it may be quite as illogical to say that

any design is really good in spite of the fact that it does not sell well as it is to say that one is really good because it does sell. Both things are said too often.

Consider the development of contemporary furniture design. This has been, broadly speaking, either evolutionary or revolutionary; obviously it is not in fact quite as black and white as this, for most designs have been a mixture of the two to some extent. It is possible to break this down even further by saying that furniture has been either evolutionary or revolutionary both in its plan or arrangement of storage which affects the general form and also in its structure which affects the detail and perhaps the form too.

For instance, the storage unit for a dining room might be planned in a revolutionary sense ignoring the form of a traditional and functionally outmoded sideboard and yet, at the same time, might be of traditional structure; in the case of a chair, on the other hand, the fundamental requirement of providing surfaces on which to sit and rest your back against has never changed so that here the form is bound to be an evolution although the structure may be a revolution.

The market for furniture of revolutionary structure is bound, I think, to be an intellectual one and a very small one. From the point of view of this competition, intended to produce furniture for a pretty conservative mass market in Scotland, the evolutionary approach to structure seems to be inescapable. I think it is fair to say that the best Scandinavian furniture, and notably the best Danish, has been designed in this way: on the other hand, the most interesting Italian and American furniture has been revolutionary. Now Scandinavian design is accepted by designers throughout the world as the best of its type, but I think that both designers and makers of furniture have pretty consistently made the mistake of taking their inspiration from the best contemporary designs on the one hand or from the best selling lines on the other without going back to the root causes that made them either good or acceptable.

The Scandinavian tradition, and particularly the

*Continued on page 34*

## Flowers from foreign fields

THOUGH FLORAL PATTERNS are typically English,\* they are by no means exclusively English. The illustrations here, showing textiles and wallpapers from several countries in two Continents, emphasise the point: these are "contemporary florals" as designers in France and Scandinavia and the USA understand the term.

A textile correspondent writes: On both furnishing and dress fabrics there has been a marked trend in recent years to develop the well-drawn, well-coloured floral along individualistic lines.

The development usually takes one of three forms. The single flower or a group of flowers is meticulously drawn in outline with only a single colour used boldly – as distinct from the herbaceous-border effect of some

traditional designs. Sometimes either a single-colour or a multi-colour design is allied to loose naturalistic treatment which suggests flowers growing in profusion, in no formal arrangement. (A particularly good example is the French chintz illustrated.) The third form of floral design, which is today being more noticeably emphasised, is that in which one colour is dominant. The earlier all-over effects are in some instances giving place to a type of design which uses one flower or one colour in the ground in such a way that it predominates, and can be used as an essential colour effect in a decorative scheme.

\* Cf "The English Tradition in Floral Design" by Alma Faulkner, in *DESIGN* last month, pages 12–18.

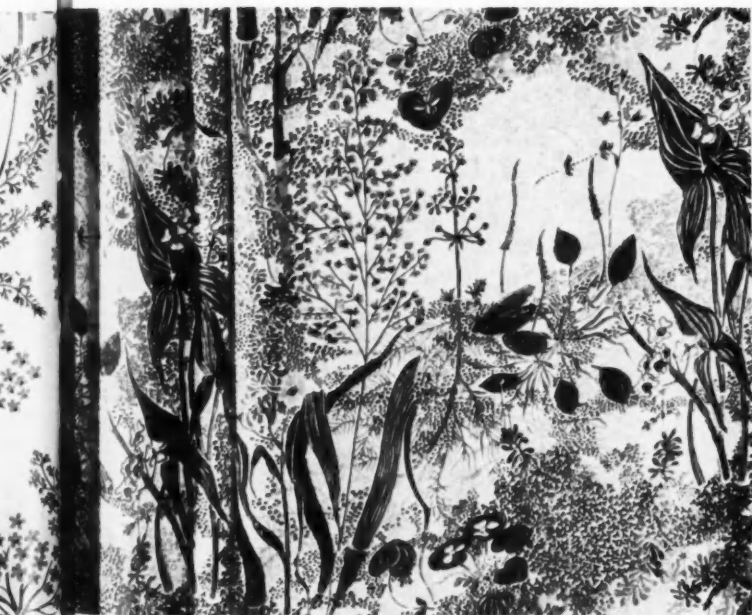


Two wallpapers by Ernst Dahl, Copenhagen. Left: designed by Preben Dahlstrøm. Right: from the exhibition of Danish Domestic Design arranged by the Arts Council and the Council of Industrial Design, 1947.





*These printed cotton furnishing fabrics were shown at an exhibition of textiles from overseas at the Colour, Design and Style Centre of the Cotton Board at Manchester last year. Left: a French chintz with Everglaze finish. The flowers are in delicate pastel shades on a white background. Right: from America, a fabric with motifs in three shades of green on a grey-brown background.*



*The boldness of pattern of these Danish textiles contrasts with the lighter wallpapers on facing page. Left: a design in five colours by Bent Karlbj for J. Fiedlers Kattuntryk, Copenhagen. Right: a Marie Gudme Leth design, June.*

# Design in Germany today

DESPITE DIFFICULTIES, Germany is making her way back on to the industrial-design map. In selecting the illustrations of current German products which appear in these pages, DESIGN has had valuable help from Dr Heinrich König of the Württemberg-Baden branch of the *Deutscher Werkbund* and one of the leading propagandists of better design in Western Germany.



The small upholstered chair above is Model 103 from Federholz-Gesellschaft of Kassel. This is a bentwood chair, formed under heat by the Thonet method. The firm's products are designed for use in restaurants and showrooms as well as private houses.

The influence of Alvar Aalto is easily recognised in the work of the Pforzheimer Bugholz-Möbel, Dietz & Co, of Pforzheim, seen at top and bottom of this page. The chair below, especially, closely resembles a pre-war Aalto design. It was designed by students of Professor Otto Haupt under his supervision. A member of Dietz's present staff at one time worked with the renowned Finnish architect-furniture-designer, and the firm maintains relations with him.

The chairs above were designed by Architekt Dipl.-Ing. G. Langerhans; below, by Architekt Dipl.-Ing. H. Lohmeyer.



The English housewife may feel that in the kitchen arrangement on right, Homeliness has been sacrificed on the shiny-topped altar of Hygiene. The furniture below it, on the other hand, is trying hard to achieve cosiness.

All the pieces illustrated on this page come from WK Sozialwerk Möbel of Stuttgart. They are distributed through the Neue Gemeinschaft für Wohnkultur, a union of 20 large stores in Western Germany, with headquarters in Stuttgart. WK is itself a co-operative enterprise affiliated to both Protestant and Catholic Churches and to the German Labour Party. It was one of the first organisations to change from heavy cumbersome furniture to light modern designs at a reasonable price.

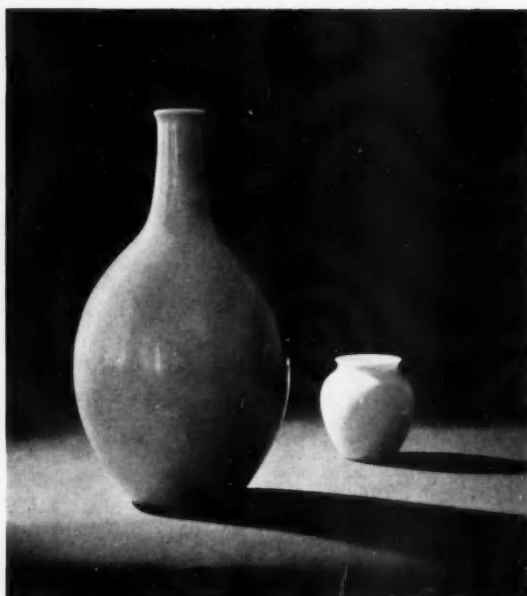
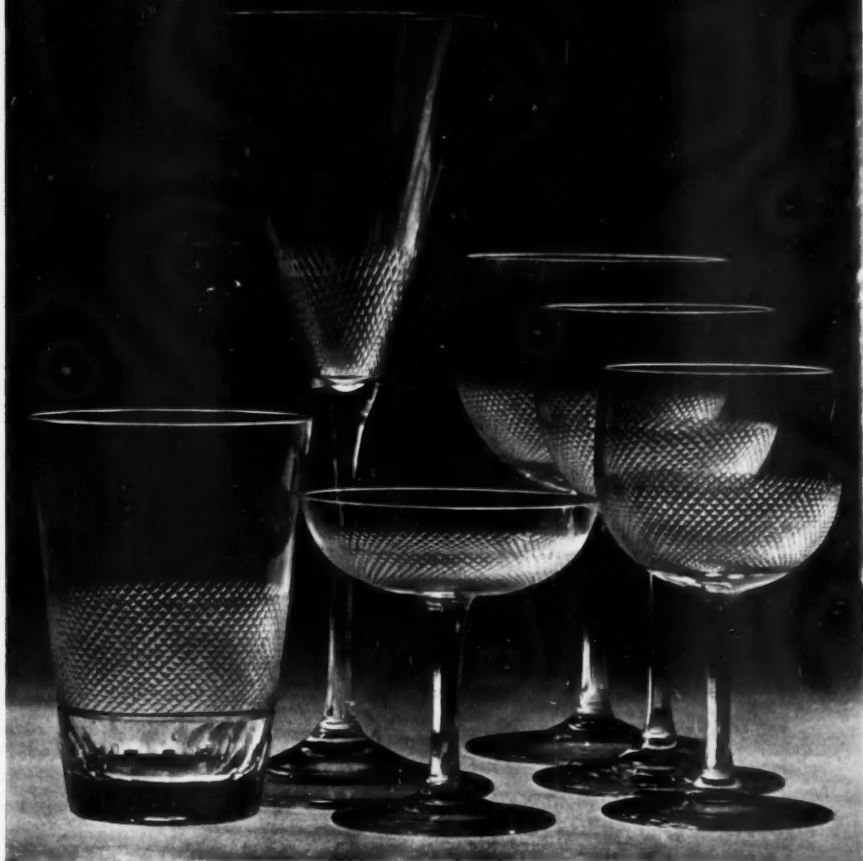


A bed-sitting room with unit furniture from the Münch Aufbaumöbel range is illustrated on page 31. These units, though more costly than the WK range represented on this page, are still moderately priced. In 1950, Richard Münch changed over from the production of very expensive furniture to these units.



*continued overleaf*

DESIGN IN  
GERMANY  
*continued*

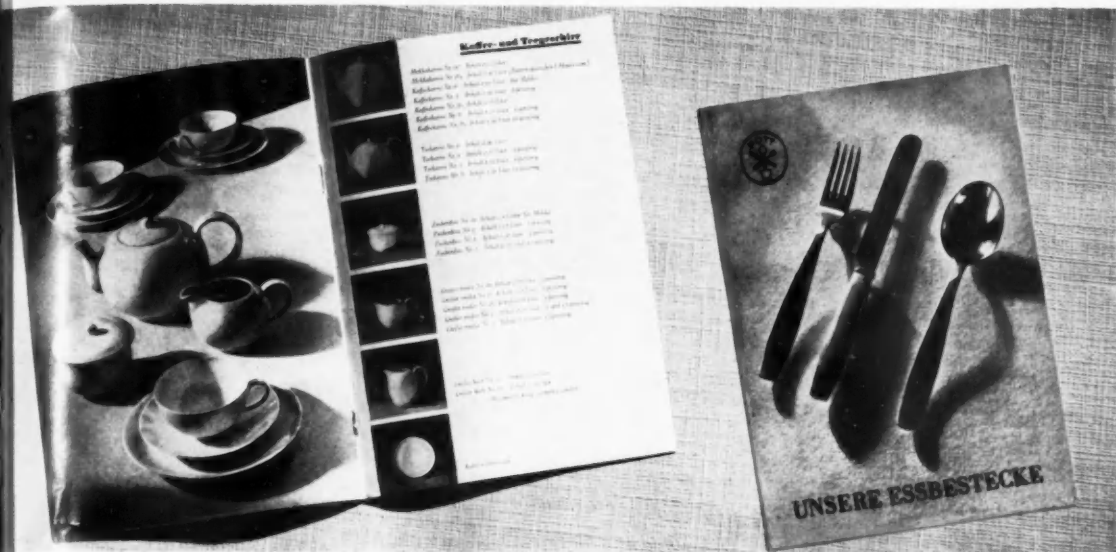


Above, engraved crystal glassware designed and made by Johann Oertel & Co, Welzheim/Württemberg.

The block is reproduced by courtesy of Verlag Gerd Hatje and is taken from their publication *Hausrat* (1951). This picture-book is one of a series, *Wie Wohnen*, sponsored by the Landesgewerbeamt (regional board of trade), Stuttgart.

Two vases from Porzellanfabrik Arzberg, of Arzberg/Oberfranken. Pattern 1503 is 8in. high, and is intended for orchids or flower-sprays; the smaller vase (Pattern 1508, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. high) is for violets.

Porzellanfabrik Arzberg are among the largest German porcelain manufacturers. In 1930 they appointed the late Dr Hermann Gretsch, then director of the Landesgewerbe-Museum at Stuttgart, to be consultant designer, and changed over completely from the traditional styles for which they had a wide reputation to contemporary design.



Well-designed print for well-designed products. Above, a double page from the catalogue of the latest Arzberg range of pottery, No. 1495, and the cover of a booklet describing the cutlery and flatware made by C. Hugo Pott, of Solingen. This firm also retained the late Dr Hermann Gretsch as designer. Note the trade-mark at top left of the cover; it is used on the knife-blade as well.



Left, Arzberg's Pattern 1382, first produced in the early 1930's – one of the Gretsch designs which came in with the new policy of Porzellanfabrik Arzberg. It is still in current production and shows no sign of dating.

Front cover picture: The Gildemeister turret lathe, Model RV, represents a successful German solution of the problem of form in machine design. A pre-selection arrangement for spindle speeds and feeds may be automatic or hand-set. Strength and rigidity is provided by the solid box-type construction and thick-walled castings.



# DAVID WHITEHEAD FABRICS

DAVID WHITEHEAD FABRICS

## New lamp-posts in the new towns

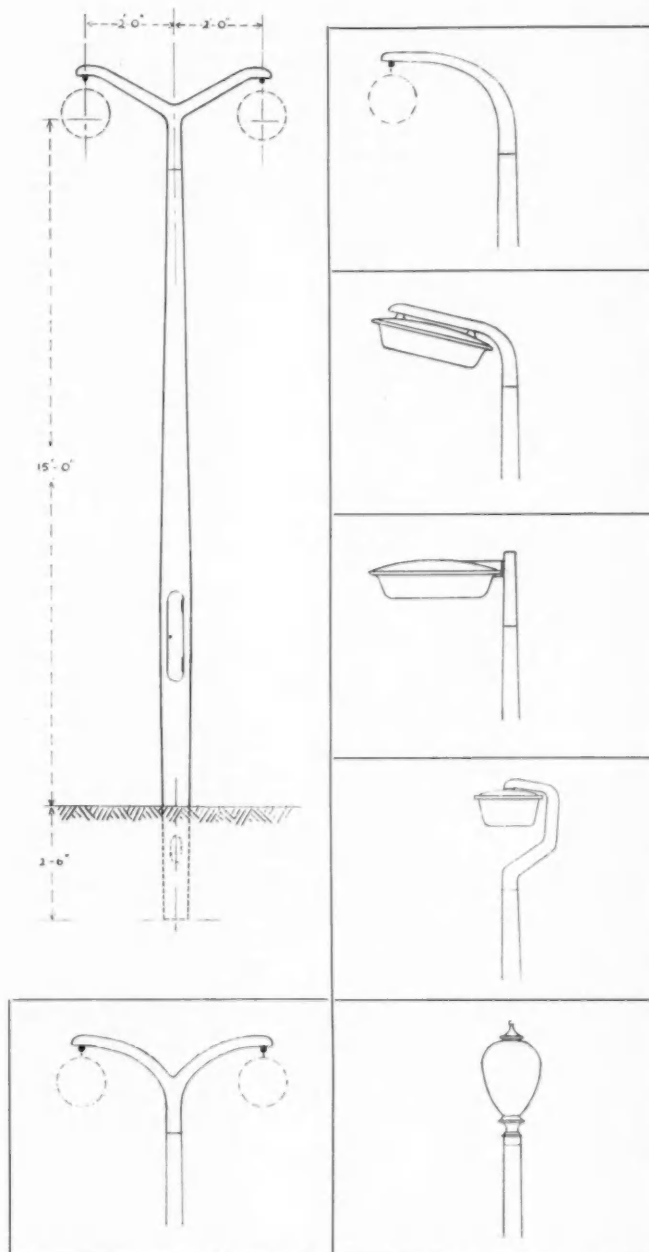
IF ALL CONCRETE lamp-posts were as inoffensive as the type illustrated here, there might be less bitter criticism of their design than there has been in recent months. This column, the *Broadcrete*, is cast in granite concrete and reinforced with steel, and its most interesting feature is that it tapers towards both ends. To achieve this shape involved a problem of extracting the core used in the casting: this was solved by the use of pneumatic rubber tubing in coupled lengths which vary in diameter according to their position in the casting. These tubes are inflated to the right size while the concrete is being cast (by high-frequency vibration) and are then deflated so that they can easily be withdrawn.

The column has smooth, unbroken lines: the equipment chamber, which often forms an ugly bulge at the base of the column, is housed in the broadest part of the structure, where it is less likely to be damaged and can be attended to without crouching on the pavement. This also leaves the base solid, the better to withstand the impact of heavy vehicles. A further advantage is that because of its slender root, the column is more suitable than other models for insertion in footpaths already crowded with mains and cables — thus permitting a freer choice of sites.

Designed by A. M. Rankin and made by Tarslag Ltd of Wolverhampton, the *Broadcrete* column has already been chosen for the Lansbury neighbourhood of Poplar, for Crawley and Stevenage new towns, and for Margate. The standard cross-section of the column is square with rounded corners, but rectangular, circular and hexagonal versions may be produced. The surface is ground and semi-polished and brings out the natural colours of the granite in the concrete.

The columns are made in two sizes for Class A and Class B roads. In the former the lamp is 25 feet above the ground and in the latter 15 feet.

Concrete lamp-posts do not have to look like "sick serpents" (John Betjeman's phrase). The *Broadcrete* column for Class B roads is shown on right with some of the brackets designed for use with it. Sockets and steel dowels ensure perfect alignment between column and bracket.



# Design NEWS SECTION

## COMPETITIONS

### International contest for carpet designs

An international carpet design competition, sponsored by the Arthur Fleischman Carpet Company and the Detroit Institute of Arts, is being held this year. The aim of the competition is to create interest in good applied design, to discover promising designers and to encourage young talent. For British designers it provides a challenge to win another major international design competition and so follow-up the successes of Robin Day with his furniture and Lucienne Day with her textile design, *Calyx* (DESIGN, May 1952, p. 32).

Originality of design, colour harmony and practicability are points the judges will particularly look for.

Prizes are generous and the winning design will be woven by the Arthur Fleischman Company during 1953. Closing date for entries is 1 January 1953, judging will take place during the month, and winners will be notified on 1 March 1953. Prize-winning designs and others of merit will be exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts in March and the exhibition will then be circulated by the American Federation of Arts in the United States and possibly abroad.

Entry forms, together with rules and further details, may be obtained from the International Carpet Design Competition Committee, Arthur Fleischman Carpet Company, 12585 Grotto Avenue, Detroit 5, Michigan, USA. Anyone is eligible to enter.

Judges of the competition will be Edgar P. Richardson, director of the Detroit Institute of Arts; Hollis S. Baker, president of Baker Furniture Inc; Charles Eames, designer; Belle Krasne, editor of *Art Digest*; Frank E. Masland, Jr, president of the Carpet Manufacturers' Institute and of C. H. Masland and Sons; Charles Nagel, director of the Brooklyn Museum; and Eero Saarinen, architect and industrial designer.

### Four sections in Furnishing competition

Details of another carpet design competition, the fourteenth of an annual series sponsored by the magazine *Furnishing*, have been announced. Entries, which must be in contemporary style, may be received in four sections: a Wilton square suitable for the living-room of a small modern house, a Wilton three-quarter width body carpet suitable for a large restaurant, a gripper Axminster square suitable for a

medium-sized house and a spool Axminster rug suitable for a medium-sized house.

Entries must be received by 25 September 1951. Further details may be obtained from the Editor, *Furnishing*, Drury House, Russell Street, London WC2.

### Awards for craftsmen

Rural furniture craftsmen are faced with two main problems: first, how to break fresh ground in design; second, how to produce their special type of individual work at a reasonable price. These are the conclusions of the judges in a recent furniture design competition organised by the Rural Industries Bureau.

In Class I (for rural furniture makers only) the prize money was divided between H. D. G. Birkett, R. V. K. Townshend, W. H. Doherty, K. L. Marshall and E. J. Rice. Class II awards went to R. E. Race, T. B. Dunne, Jennifer A. Simpson and D. V. Woodhead. In neither class did a competitor submit work of sufficiently outstanding merit to qualify for the first prize offered. There were 168 entries.

## NEW PRODUCTS

### Selling glass in Africa

South Africa is seldom regarded as a market for products of contemporary design, and it is not surprising that British pressed domestic glassware which imitates traditional cut-glass continues to sell there although it is more expensive than American glass of more original design. This is the view expressed by Mr Hamilton Fulton, Chance Brothers' export manager, who recently returned from a ten-

week business tour of South Africa.

The continuing demand for the traditional must, however, be influenced by the fact that consumers seldom see anything else in the shops: importers are reluctant to use scarce import permits to buy goods which they are not sure of selling. South Africa is largely an untried market for contemporary products: Mr Fulton found an immediate, though limited, demand for Chance's new *Fiesta* glass (illustrated below), the price of which puts it in closer competition with traditional cut-glass. He was also able to stimulate demand for contemporary patterns in rolled glass such as the *Festival* pattern (DESIGN, February 1952, p. 14).

### Plastic nameplates

The recent ban on the use of copper and zinc for nameplates has set many manufacturers thinking of new materials which can be used instead. Both product nameplates, manufactured in series, and door plates and direction plates, which have to be produced individually, are affected. Butler Jones (Nameplates) Ltd, London SE26, are now using, for the latter type of plate, a combination of plastic board and cut-out plastic letters. The board is dark brown—similar in colour to a bronze plate—and the letters are ivory white. They are inlaid flush with the surface.

Two standard letter-forms are available—the firm's Style 130, a sans-serif, and Style 100, a traditional Roman letter. As the letters are engraved by machine, with a cutter revolving at high speed, the corners (and the serifs in the Style 100) inevitably become slightly rounded. The

customer who is willing to pay more for hand-work can have them hand finished; noticeably sharper angles and crisper outlines can be attained in this way. (On the other hand, the customer who demands something less costly can have a plastic plate in which the letters are engraved and painted but not inlaid: this is satisfactory until the paint becomes dirty.)

Of the inlaid plates, W. R. Butler-Jones, the firm's managing director, states: "We do not claim that they are as good as bronze plates, but from rigorous tests which we have carried out, they should stand up well when fixed outside buildings, provided they are cleaned regularly and rubbed over with furniture cream."



Plastic letters inlaid in plastic board. Hand-finishing of the letters of the centre plate has given them serifs which are sharper in outline than those of the top plate.

## PRINTING AND PACKAGING

### Better carpet labels

Bad design can become a bad habit; taken for granted, unconsidered, until someone with a fresh eye comes along and points it out. Carpet labels (or tickets as the trade calls them) are an example of this.

Like many British carpet manufacturers, the Empire Carpet Co Ltd, of Kidderminster, have been using the same tickets on their products for at least thirty years. During this period, the designs of the firm's products have changed considerably, keeping pace with changing public demand, but, until recently, the same label was attached to new patterns as to old.

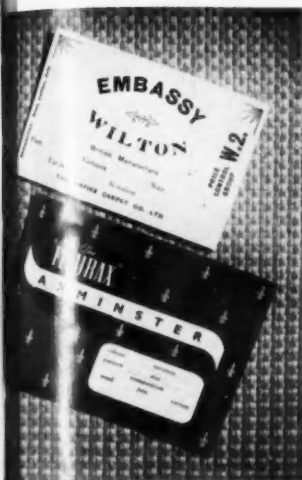
This did not escape the notice of Leonard C. Griffin, a young director of the company who has made its design policy his special care. Mr Griffin first roughed out an idea for a completely new style of ticket, and on this basis finished drawings were prepared by a local advertising agency.

The new design is printed from two line blocks and type. One block prints a colour background (in different colours for



Chance's *Fiesta* glass is decorated by a process which ensures that the pattern will not wear off. The *Greco* pattern, above, has a wide black border on opaque glass.

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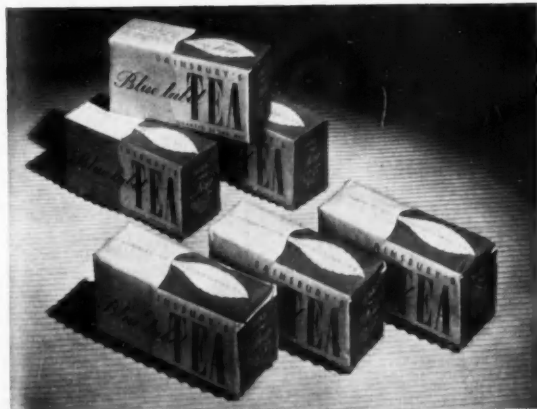
Empire carpet labels: before and after redesign.

different lines), patterned with the firm's fleur-de-lis mark. The other, printing in black, carries standard details and the firm's address. To supplement it, necessary additional information is set in type in predetermined spaces.

### Display value

Because of the importance which it attaches to packaging as an aspect of selling, the Tea Centre commissioned Jesse Collins, FSA, to design two sets of labels which they can use on dummy packs to show the trade how to display tea to the best advantage. These are shown on the cover.

The design at the bottom right of the illustration has black lettering on a blue, pink or yellow ground and is based, Mr Collins explains, "on a contemporary handling of a traditional aspect of this subject." It is intended



These new tea packs by Sainsbury's design consultant, Leonard Beaumont, FSA, provide an interesting comparison with Jesse Collins' designs (for a hypothetical John Teaman) illustrated on the front cover and referred to above.

for a high-quality blend of tea. The other design is more forceful, to call attention to itself in self-service stores. It is produced in red, white and black or blue, white and black.

### Soap in cartons

Fairy soap is now packaged in cartons for the first time since the war. The new pack contains two bars of soap and was designed by the manufacturers, Thomas Hedley and Co Ltd, in co-operation with Richard Lonsdale-Hands Associates. The word *Fairy* is in white on a band of olive green against a background of lime yellow.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Penrose does it again

The *Penrose Annual* has established for itself a firm place on the bookshelf of the graphic art world. Its publisher could, with justifiable pride, run riot with claims of . . . 150 pages of text, full colour insets, many specially printed, 20 general articles, 24 technical articles, a volume two inches thick and only 30s. ! But Percy Lund Humphries are content with *A review of the graphic arts* edited by R. B. Fishenden.

Nearly twenty years as editor of the *Penrose Annual* has made Mr Fishenden the chief recorder of the graphic arts in Britain. From each volume the printing industry can assess the designers' contribution to its craft, while the designer reads of technical advances in the industry he serves. Between designer and printer the buyer of print has the advantage of specialist views of both, with the addition of articles by authorities in his own sphere of advertising or publishing.

This 46th Annual records 1951 with particular emphasis on the Festival of Britain. John Hadfield, Paul Reilly and Nikolaus Pevsner write on the Festival Book exhibition, Festival publicity and exhibition lettering, and many pages are devoted to



German unit furniture from the Münch Aufbaumöbel range. (See note on page 25.)

illustrations of the South Bank exhibition.

Design training, type design, book production, lithography and photography are all given space; articles are by practitioners who are specialists in their own spheres. BBC publications are reviewed by Douglas Cleverdon and the eight page inset of reproductions will surely send many a student of the typographical arts to Marylebone High Street in search of specimens.

In the preceding volume J. R. Brumwell mourned the disappearance of the artist from advertising; in the current volume Cecil D. Nottley makes a spirited reply with *A Flourish of the Arts in Advertising* reminding us of the many advertising designers who consistently distinguish the graphic arts.

The technical section is more than routine reporting. If the publishers could be persuaded to issue an index covering, at least, the post-war volumes, it would be found that an encyclopaedia of printing had been quietly compiled. This year the range is from colour photography, through colour separation and reproduction, inks, photographic type composition, photo-engraving, and most of the printing processes to electronics, binding and research.

The section, *Illustration representative of the year*, has, in most previous years, been an odd assortment – the selection of which one would hesitate to attribute to the editor. A clue to the puzzle may be found in the new sub-title, *Contributed illustrations*. The level is higher this year, but there are still some specimens which even good printing technique do not excuse.

The production and binding are of the high standard expected of Lund Humphries and the typography of Edward Price is workmanlike and unassuming.

PETER RAY

### Typography and the spirit of the age

The Amsterdam Typefoundry has made a handsome present to its friends, and a notable contribution to the history of typography, in its centenary volume, called *The Letter as a Work of*

Art. The text of this book has been written by Dr Gerard Knuttel, art historian, and it is lavishly supplemented by pairs of pictures, the left-hand page of each pair showing a typical use of a type-face and the facing page showing its parallel in the architecture or decorative art of the same period. The selection has been made sympathetically, and one can only imagine the amount of research work which it must have entailed.

The reader may find his enjoyment of *The Letter as a Work of Art* slightly impaired by the use of an unusually long line (41½ ems) for the typesetting, and by the translator's liking for such mandarin words as "classicistic" and "contemporaneous." But these are minor blemishes in a book whose conception and execution are both admirable. *The Letter as a Work of Art* has been designed by D. Dooijes, de Roos's successor at the Amsterdam Typefoundry. It is set in the de Roos type, with text pages printed letterpress and picture pages gravure. The production reaches the same standard as the contents – which is high indeed.

A. D.

Books received: *Aluminium in Building*, a handsome book of 112 quarto pages which shows with text, photographs and diagrams the widespread architectural uses of this material; *Properties of Nonal Alloys*, a booklet containing information previously published in Nonal data sheets; and *Specifications for Aluminium and Aluminium Alloy Products* (fifth edition); all from the Northern Aluminium Co Ltd; *Coates Brothers* designed by Graphic Arts Ltd to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Coates Brothers Inks Ltd; *Hope's Windows*, an extremely well-produced catalogue which describes and illustrates the metal windows which Henry Hope and Son Ltd produce and gives useful information on design, fixing and glazing as well as listing specifications; *A Book of Typefaces* (mostly for display), W. S. Cowell Ltd, 25s.

★

Jack Stafford, formerly editor of *Ark*, the Royal College of Art



students' journal, has redesigned the *English-Speaking World*, magazine of the English-Speaking Union. He is now art editor of this publication, and a consultant designer.

## LETTERS

### Instructive comparison

SIR: With reference to the sequence of photographs of Rover cars in Mr Williams' article on "Car Design for World Markets" (April), would you please illustrate a body on a Rover chassis, manufactured by Carrosserie Graber, Wichtrach, Switzerland, which appeared under the caption "A really clean and dignified job" in an article by Leonard Beaumont, FSIA, in the October 1949 *Art and Industry*.

I think the comparison with the all-Rover post-war cars is most instructive.

K. L. BROOKFIELD,  
School of Commerce,  
Oxford.

\* We gladly comply with Mr Brookfield's request - and leave readers to draw their own conclusions. EDITOR

### Furniture in the North

SIR: I have just seen your note in "Notebook" (April *DESIGN*) about the suggestion that furniture of good contemporary design is "seldom, if ever" seen in the North. . . .

At present about 60 per cent of our furniture-floor area is devoted to examples of contemporary furniture by the leading makers and we have just completed a successful exhibition (in conjunction with *House and Garden*) of modern decorative schemes. We believe that contemporary furniture has come to stay and whilst we recognise that there is inevitable reluctance on the part of the customer to

accept something out of the ordinary, we are delighted at the response which has been shown to our displays of contemporary furniture.

For a fortnight from 5 May we played host to the Council of Industrial Design exhibition of "Contemporary Furniture in Room Settings." \* To accommodate this exhibition we devoted more space than ever to contemporary furniture, furnishings and decoration, and we incurred considerable expense in staging it and in publicising it adequately; but we felt sure that it was an event that would appeal to our customers - and these presumably are the people with whom "the most vulgar designs achieve their greatest popularity"! We believe that the people of the North are just as conscious of good design as the people of any other section of the community; the people of this area particularly so, because of their close interest in textiles and the many other manufacturing processes in which good design plays an important part.

J. A. HORROX  
Advertising Manager,  
Brown, Muff and Co Ltd,  
Bradford

\* See article on pages 10-13.

EDITOR

### Book-cases for books

SIR: We read with interest your article (in March) on book-cases, and noted that these are usually designed primarily for appearance and secondarily for housing books!

For some years we have been designing, manufacturing and erecting varying types of steel shelving for libraries, and we work on a balanced principle of design, so that the maximum number of books can be housed on shelving suitable in colour



Steel bookcases in a Russell Square house, now the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. (Photograph: Country Life).

and style to the rooms and buildings for which it is intended. We enclose photographs illustrating this, one of which [not reproduced - ED] was taken in a famous house designed by Adam. The other shows a room in one of the older houses in Russell Square.

We consider it a mistake to try to make steel shelving look like wood, which is apt to cause disharmony when there is any wooden furniture appearing near it. Harmony can be achieved by designed contrast. Well-designed electric light fittings in ancient buildings are not disguised as rushlights, so why endeavour to alter the appearance of good steel shelving?

(MISS) E. J. GLADING  
Director,  
Weldex Productions Ltd  
London E 14

### Gravy boat under fire

SIR: In your January issue you illustrated a gravy boat and platter by Phoenix. The accompanying note said that "the design

was developed by the firm's Design Committee, which includes the managers of the production, planning, development and sales departments," other members of the committee, if any, remaining anonymous. A claim was then made that "the spur-like handle is easy to hold - the top forming a thumb-rest." . . . I have used a Phoenix gravy boat for some months, and would offer the following comments: (1) though I have fairly small hands the handle is so awkward to hold that I have to put my thumb over and into the boat (and the gravy) to prevent it tipping, which it does with great ease because (2) the point of balance, instead of remaining low and central as in the old round-bottomed boats with legs, shifts forward with the contents down the deep narrow shape. (3) The matching platter is just too short to catch drips from the lip.

Perhaps the Design Committee would care to comment?

JOCK KINNEIR, MSIA  
London W 4

\* Similar views have been expressed by other readers, G. A. Thompson of Shoreham-by-Sea and Gordon Dunn of Doncaster.

### Housewives' views

SIR: With reference to the letter from Margaret Price in April *DESIGN*, we should like to say that it was in order to narrow the gap between the technical world and the home that the Electrical Association for Women was formed in 1924.

It has always represented the woman consumer's point of view on domestic electrical matters to those responsible for putting modern technical developments at the service of the housewife. Believing that there should be a close liaison between supplier and user, the Association has followed a programme of electrical education, which on the one hand aims at bringing the requirements of differing types of homes to the notice of the makers of electrical appliances and accessories, and on the other hand endeavours to educate women in a knowledge



Swiss body on a Rover chassis: illustrated, through the courtesy of Art and Industry, to comply with Mr Brookfield's request (above).





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of what is practicable in design and performance.

In one of the Association's latest surveys entitled *Towards Perfection*, answers were invited to a questionnaire which related to the design and efficiency of the main items of domestic electrical equipment. The resulting report, when it appears, should be of special value, for it was stipulated that opinions should only be given if based on actual experience. The results of pre-

vious inquiries have always been welcomed by the electrical manufacturers.

The EAW fully endorses Mrs Price's views on the necessity of supplying the housewife with the "tools for the job," on which so much stress is laid by other members of the community.

PHYLLIS THOMPSON  
Press Officer,  
Electrical Association for  
Women,  
London SW 1

#### 'People want furniture that is warm and cosy'

*continued from p. 21*

Danish tradition, has been based on British work of the eighteenth century. It has been adopted by men with great feeling for quality and detail for use in Scandinavian rooms. These rooms tend to be light and airy and centrally heated and could not be much more different from the usual run of small British homes which are fairly dark and fairly stuffy and often exceedingly cold except for a minute area of intense heat round the fire. So the light, hard, elegant furniture of Scandinavia will not go down in the mass market in this country — and quite rightly.

I think that people like warm colour and solidity . . . furniture that is warm and cosy. There is no reason why such furniture should not be as good in its own way as the best Scandinavian

furniture. It will not be the same and it will not sell in Denmark, but then Danish furniture will not sell in Scotland. The source is the same: the best of the British eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (and this includes the work of such distinguished Scotsmen as the brothers Adam).

There, as I see it, is the problem. First the analysis of public demand, then the evolution of a contemporary type of furniture from the splendid inspiration of the past. But it is no good taking somebody else's solution designed for a different purpose, using the attractive tricks to be found in this, and giving it a bit more weight for Scottish homes; and it is no good drifting mindlessly back towards reproductions of reproductions of old furniture.

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## MERCURY

Mercury, also known by its old English name quicksilver, is the only pure metal that is liquid at ordinary temperatures. One of the heaviest of the elements, it is obtained from cinnabar, a compound of mercury and sulphur, which is mined in Italy, Spain and the Americas. The best known use of mercury is in thermometers and barometers, but its ability to dissolve certain other metals makes it of importance in the chemical industry, and in gold-mining where it is used in one method of extracting gold. Compounds of mercury have many uses. Both mercurous and mercuric chloride play an important part in medicine—Paracelsus, the Swiss physician was using

mercury compounds early in the sixteenth century. In agriculture they are used in the manufacture of seed dressings. Oxides of the metal are used in special marine paints, and the bright scarlet pigment, vermilion, is made from mercuric sulphide. Fulminate of mercury, a powerful explosive, is used in the manufacture of detonators.

I.C.I. uses mercury in one method of producing caustic soda and chlorine. It also uses compounds of mercury to make plastics, dyestuffs and other chemicals, including phthalic anhydride, one of the intermediates used in the manufacture of the brilliant 'Monastral' blue pigment.



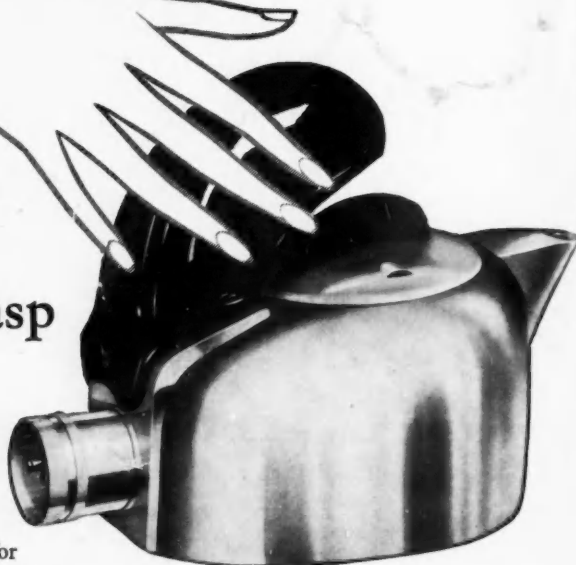


Illustrated below: 'Davensel' Battery Tester, manufactured by Partridge, Wilson & Co. Ltd. 'H.M.V.' Kettle marketed by E.M.I. Sales & Service Ltd.



GOOD DESIGN . . .

. . . within their grasp



The moulding process is at once an invitation and a challenge to the designer. The right material rightly used brings good design to home and industry, improving appearance, performance and productivity. A well-designed kettle handle, for instance, is practical in service, prevents burned hands, is hygienic and easy to clean. Similarly, the moulded handle of an everyday workshop tool is an electrical insulator unaffected by water, oil and grease. Naturally, it must be assumed that the designer chooses the right moulding material. Literally hundreds of different materials, providing infinite combinations of properties, have been developed by Bakelite Limited whose advice is freely available to designers everywhere.

**BAKELITE**

TREFOIL



REGD. TRADE MARKS

**MOULDING  
MATERIALS**

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